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Appropriating from the World of Business: Andy Warhol's Key to Success

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By Rusty A. Meadows

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Introduction

The Pop art movement was one in which artists no longer fought against the consumerist world they lived in. They chose to embrace the unstoppable power of businesses around the world and capitalize on people's obsession with products, like companies such as Coca-Cola and Campbell's were doing. For this reason artists appropriated products such as Coca-Cola bottles and Brillo pad boxes, and began depicting the objects in their art works. But this was just the first step. From there artists began to emulate the products corporations were selling to the public. Artists started appropriating the very techniques used to promote consumer products in their own works. Works of art were soon produced using the Ben-Day dot process used for commercial printing of publications like comic books and also appropriated screen printing techniques used in signs and t-shirts. Artists like Roy Liechtenstein and Andy Warhol used these processes to make paintings and prints.

Mirroring products and techniques was not enough; artists began connecting to commercialism on a deeper level. In order to become more entrenched in the Pop art movement artists like Roy Liechtenstein and James Rosenquist realized they needed to be more like the corporations they copied. Beyond the use of commercial production techniques, they adapted the use of corporate philosophy to their own purpose. Artists like Claes Oldenburg claimed, "I am for Kool-art, 7-

Up art, Pepsi art, Sunkist art, 39 cents art, 15 cents art.”¹ The Pop movement also inspired mantras like, “I consume therefore I am.”²

Andy Warhol was no exception. The artist began by copying consumer products, then appropriating the process of silk-screening, and finally emulating the deeper conceptual levels of corporations by mimicking their organizational structure, ability to create memorable experiences, and willingness to experiment. Due to the artist’s famous declaration that he wished to be a machine, Warhol’s willingness to experiment is the most well known.³ This idea seemed to be successful in earlier works like the Brillo pad and Kellogg boxes, but Warhol soon found out that if he wanted his life to be more machine-like, it couldn’t be run like a traditional studio, which often depended upon one individual. Warhol made the decision to formally incorporate his studio and employ some of the operational philosophies of the businesses he hoped to replicate.

This thesis highlights three techniques that Warhol used to maximize his success in producing commissioned portraits. These techniques were: his ability to craft memorable experiences for those who sat for portraits; the use of his social

¹ Oldenburg, Claes, *Statement, Environment, Situations, Spaces* (New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1961), n.p., repr. in Steven Henry Madoff, ed., *Pop Art, A Critical History* (Berkeley, 1977), p. 213-15, repr. in Erika Doss, *Twentieth-Century American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 155.

² Doss, Erika. *Twentieth-Century American Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. p. 154.

³ Hills, Patricia. *Modern Art in the USA: Issue and Controversies of the 20th Century*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001. p. 228. Originally published in G. R. Swenson’s interview with Andy Warhol, in “What is Pop Art? Answers from 8 painters, part I,” *Art News* 62, no. 7 (November 1963): 26, p. 60-61.

networking to bring in clients; and his encouragement of seemingly unrelated experiments. Each of these techniques will be illustrated with one concrete example. In addition to these points this thesis also identifies and investigates Andy Warhol Enterprises, the artist's company, and the influence his company had on his artistic endeavors. The examination of Andy Warhol Enterprises enables us to understand why Warhol appropriated many aspects of the consumer driven world and also explores Warhol's success due, in part, to his willingness to transform his artistic production into a business.

The concepts presented in this paper stem from extensive interviews conducted by the author. Each of the techniques studied here were identified from the more than sixty pages of transcriptions that resulted from five original interviews of those who worked with and around Andy Warhol. In addition to the interviews, much of the conceptual underpinnings of this work were developed during the author's curation of the exhibition *Deeply Superficial: Andy Warhol's "Voyeurism"* at the Muscarelle Museum of Art which was on display from November 7, 2009 to January 17, 2010. In preparation for the interviews, exhibition, and thesis, the author conducted research at the library of The Museum of Modern Art in New York City for the summer of 2009.

Chapter One: Warhol's Corporation

In 1957 Andy Warhol established Andy Warhol Enterprises to represent his art-making endeavors.⁴ The company was used for most of the artist's activities and paid him an annual salary. Starting with its incorporation, and for many years thereafter, the activities of this business were essentially the artist's life. Andy Warhol Enterprises remained fairly private until 1977, when Warhol reorganized all of his business operations.

In his *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, the artist writes, when talking about his shift in identification from a person to a company that, "...I sort of stopped *doing* things and started *producing* things..."⁵ This statement is in line with what is generally known about Warhol's artistic process that was common in the Factory, as Warhol's studio came to be known.

Warhol famously said, "I think everybody should be a machine."⁶ Warhol wanted to be a machine, he wanted his art to be produced as if it were coming out of a machine, he wanted his entire artistic process to operate like a machine. From his early days producing fine art, Warhol hired people to work for him. As early as 1962, Warhol saw great benefits from the people he employed. One of his first

⁴ Dalton, David, and Tony Scherman. *POP: The Genius of Andy Warhol*. New York: Harpers, 2009. p. 368.

⁵ Warhol, Andy. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*. New York: Harcourt, 1975. p. 180.

⁶ Hills, p. 228.

assistants was David Dalton, who helped with mechanical work like stretching canvases and printing images.⁷ In addition to Dalton, the assistant's sister Sarah helped Warhol as well. Both worked on a part-time basis, but it was Sarah Dalton who first introduced Warhol to the idea that photographs could be reproduced through the silkscreen process he was then using for his drawings.⁸ This suggestion by his worker was one that the artist would build upon for the rest of his career, using the silkscreen production process for almost all of his later works. (Fig. 1).

It was not until Warhol hired Gerard Malanga in 1963 that his notion of the artist as a machine began to materialize. Malanga performed numerous tasks that served as the operational foundation upon which Warhol could quickly create paintings. (Fig. 2). In an interview Malanga describes some of his day-to-day activities:

“Well, in the beginning it was just the silkscreening chores. Delivering a photograph with instructions to Mr. Harry Golden. He had a company called Edna Silkscreen. I would deliver the photograph or the newspaper tear-sheet or magazine tear-sheet there with Andy’s instructions to what the size of the silkscreen would be, the tonal values would be. Then I would pick that material

⁷ Dalton, David. 2009. Interview by Rusty A. Meadows. Audio recording. October 14. Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia.

⁸ Dalton and Scherman, p. 109.

up maybe a day or two later and Andy would review it and I would bring it back down for the final phase on the production of the screen. And then the screen actually, if they were really big they would be shipped to The Factory or actually we started working in the firehouse. If they were small enough I would just go downtown and pick them up and bring them up by subway or taxi. And then I would go shopping with Andy for silkscreen inks...”⁹

As Warhol’s popularity grew, he expanded his operations to better accommodate the increasing number of his commissions. Warhol’s new production process turned into what was eventually labeled the Factory. In the Factory, Warhol had numerous people working for him. He still employed Malanga as his manager. By 1965 he had hired the photographer Billy Name to document the Factory and unlock the doors in the morning; he had also hired Paul Morrissey as a film assistant. There were many others performing various tasks that made the Factory function. By the mid 1960s, Warhol’s activities were more business-like than at any time before. (Fig. 3).

In the Factory, Warhol conceptualized the final outcome of a work of art and, using a minimum of one knowledgeable assistant, physically produced the paintings. Using a process similar to an assembly line, the artist could create more work than more traditional studio artists. The Factory not only allowed

⁹ Malanga, Gerard. 2009. Telephone interview by Rusty A. Meadows. Audio recording. July 29. Muscarelle Museum of Art, Virginia.

Warhol to increase his output, but also to develop the conceptual underpinnings of his art.

Soon after the establishment of the Factory in 1964, Warhol began to further the notion of his art work as a business. One can see how Warhol treated the identification of his operations as a business as more than a label when he says, “...as the head of a company, I felt that I had other people to think about.”¹⁰ His acknowledgement of the other people represented by his business was an executive mindset: he was aware that he was there to operate with the interest of stakeholders (employees, gallery owners, clients) in mind, not just his own. Although Warhol was the sole shareholder of Andy Warhol Enterprises, he did express interest in one day selling stock in his company on Wall Street.¹¹ As for this comment, Warhol was most likely referring to his employees who would be damaged if his company failed.

Warhol’s other company was Andy Warhol Films, Inc. which was established on April 5, 1966.¹² By 1968 it was run by Paul Morrissey who, before then, had “served as executive producer, scriptwriter, editor, one-man crew and business manager” for Warhol’s film making endeavors.¹³ Warhol used this company to make deals with film distributors and maximize profits from the films.

¹⁰ Warhol, p. 180.

¹¹ Danto, Arthur C. *Andy Warhol*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. p. 123.

¹² Dalton and Scherman, p. 368.

¹³ Bourdon, David. “Warhol as Filmmaker.” *Art in America* 59, no. 3, May/June, 1971. p. 48 - 53.

The week of February 5, 1968, Warhol moved from the original Factory on 47th street to a new location on Union Square.¹⁴ The new location was called the Factory out of habit, while the process by which he produced art had become noticeably different compared to the process he had established at the original Factory. This is where Warhol shifted from operating a studio to running a business that oversaw the operations of his studio. According to Arthur C. Danto, the atmosphere at the new Factory was meant, to “make the setup a far more efficient, more businesslike operation.”¹⁵ Warhol operated out of this location from 1968 to 1977. This second Factory is where Warhol developed the business aspects of his artistic processes that would make him even more successful financially. (Fig. 4).

Warhol’s second major move came in the summer of 1977, when he dropped the name “Factory” and moved into his third workspace at 860 Broadway.¹⁶ In *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up*, Bob Colacello described some of the changes:

“The third [location] was laid out like a circle and as you went round it, you passed through the quarters, each with its own mood and style, of the various businesses in the Factory family, with *Interview*

¹⁴ Dalton and Scherman, p. 411.

¹⁵ Danto, p. 121.

¹⁶ Warhol, Andy. *The Andy Warhol Diaries*. Edited by Pat Hackett. New York: Warner Books, 1989. p. xiv.

[magazine] still the poorest relation, and Andy Warhol Films, Inc. more estranged than ever. Paul [Morrissey] didn't have a desk at the third Factory, nor did he have a title in the new company Andy formed. The new stationery, and the lobby directory at 860 Broadway, said Andy Warhol Enterprises - or AWE for short. Andy was chairman, Fred [Hughes] was president and Vincent [Fremont] was vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Andy Warhol Films, Inc. henceforth existed only as the copyright owner of the movies that Andy and Paul had made together. And Paul was gone.”¹⁷

Although Warhol felt the title of the Factory was worn out, he continued to employ the same process of providing the conceptual basis for the works while others physically produced them. This change was again aimed at making his organization appear more corporate-like and ultimately more productive. (Fig. 5). The accumulation of learned processes and techniques that Warhol adapted from the business world are those that made his goal possible.

¹⁷ Colacello, Bob. *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up*. New York: Harper Collins, 1990. p. 237.

Chapter Two: Warhol's exceptional ability to craft a memorable sitter experience

By 1963 Warhol had made a splash in the art world with his silkscreened versions of America's favorite things -- Campbell's Soup cans, boxes of Brillo pads, Marilyn Monroe, and Elizabeth Taylor. After challenging the artworld status quo with his ability to take the ordinary and make it look iconic, Warhol received his first portrait commission.

In order to take his artistic involvement with the Pop movement to the next level Warhol needed to go beyond merely appropriating consumer products, as he had done for all of his previous Pop work. He realized he had to become the producer of these items. He needed the ability to create an iconic face instead of simply appropriating it.

For Warhol to achieve his goal he had to turn to a concept used by the companies he wished to emulate. Warhol hoped to elicit their ability to "wow" consumers using their products. Warhol knew that the reason Coca-Cola was so successful was because it tasted better than milk and water and when people tried it for the first time they were so overwhelmed by the massive amount of caffeinated sugar and the bold taste that they were not only hooked for life, but they would share the story of these experiences with everyone they could. This was true for almost any product that was not an absolute necessity. Warhol

aimed to capitalize on the “wow” factor by constructing similar situations in which he could “wow” his sitters into making him enormously successful.

With his first commissioned portrait, which was of the collector Ethel Scull, Warhol began to develop his ability to “wow” sitters which he would use to produce tens of thousands of painted canvases. The artist took the traditional procedure for producing a commissioned portrait and inserted his unpredictability and inventiveness. Warhol’s ability to create memorable experiences, once perfected in the early 1970s, proved to be all the artist needed to make him more successful than ever before.

The story of Mrs. Scull’s portrait is one that defines many of the processes Warhol used to create memorable sitter experiences. Once Warhol realized the potential of commissioned portraits, he used shock and pampering to create the experiences that were used for the remainder of his career. Ethel Scull was known as a real beauty. She had a tall slender body, a truly stunning form, and gorgeous brown hair. Her husband Robert, who commissioned the portrait, owned one of the most successful taxicab fleets in New York City, which made the Sculls very wealthy. Warhol loved superficial beauty and was fascinated with any type of celebrity but it was the Sculls’ money that most fascinated Warhol.

By the time of the commission in 1963, the Sculls had known Warhol for years. Ethel and Robert Scull were among the first collectors to amass a collection of

Pop art. The couple chose to use art as a means to heighten their social status.¹⁸ They both made it a priority to be at every major art opening in New York. Robert Scull perused the shows while his wife mingled wearing the latest designer dress. After only a few years the Sculls bought their way into the New York art scene and demanded quite a bit from the artist they commissioned.¹⁹

Once the details of Ethel Scull's portrait had been worked out, Warhol scheduled to pick Mrs. Scull up from her apartment in early 1963. Mrs. Scull was nervous about having her portrait made by Warhol because of the unpredictable nature that had, in his art, made him famous. Mrs. Scull pictured Warhol and herself going to one of New York City's finest photographers such as Richard Avedon but was surprised by where they went.

In a 1973 film interview Mrs. Scull recounts being picked up by Warhol:

"He came for me that day, and he said, 'All right, we're off.'

And I said, 'Well, where are we going?'

'Just down to 42nd Street and Broadway.'

I said, 'What are we going to do there?'

He said, 'I'm going to take pictures of you.'

I said, 'For what?'

¹⁸ Glueck, Grace. "Ethel Scull, a Patron of Pop and Minimal Art, Dies at 79." *New York Times*, September 1, 2001.

¹⁹ Hackett, Pat, and Andy Warhol. *Popism: The Andy Warhol Sixties*. New York: Harcourt, 1980. p. 108-109.

He said, 'For the portrait.'

I said, 'In those [photobooshs]? My God, I'll look terrible!'

He said, 'Don't worry,' and took out coins.²⁰

Once in the photobooth in Times Square, Warhol put quarters in the machine to capture Mrs. Scull's beautiful face. The photobooshs themselves were small boxes that simply had a seat and a camera. The sitter would enter the booth through a small opening covered by a curtain. Once inside, the camera had a little red light that would blink before it snapped a picture. A typical sitting cost twenty-five cents and produced four images on a single photo sheet. (Fig. 6).

Mrs. Scull continued:

"...he said, 'We'll take the high key and the low key, and I'll push you inside, and you watch the little red light.'"

He said, 'Just watch the red light,' and I froze. I watched the red light and never did anything. So Andy would come in and poke me and make me do all kinds of things, and I relaxed finally. I think the whole place, wherever we were, thought they had two nuts in there. We were running from one booth to another, and he took all these pictures and they were drying all over the place. At the end of the

²⁰ Scull, Ethel in de Antonio, Emile, and Mitch Tuchman. Painters Painting: The New York Art Scene 1940-1970. DVD. New York: Virgil Films and Entertainment, 2009. Originally distributed in 1973.

thing he said, 'Now, you want to see them?' And they were so sensational that he didn't need Richard Avedon. I was so pleased, I think I'll go there for all my pictures from now on."²¹

It is hard to describe how honestly thrilled Mrs. Scull seemed in this film while reminiscing about her time with Warhol. The large smile and her constant grinning towards her husband, who stands behind her in the interview, showed the socialite's true feelings towards the artist. The footage of the interview vividly shows, through the consistently appreciative face of Mrs. Scull, the true and lasting impact Warhol's presence and ideas were capable of creating. By listening to and viewing Mrs. Scull during this interview it can be seen how truly happy she was with her photographs.

Because Warhol and Ethel Scull were normally at the same parties and gatherings in the art world, Mrs. Scull probably felt she knew Warhol well. This familiarity allowed her to quickly open up to Warhol during the session. Her level of comfort with the artist made all the difference in the final outcome of the photographs and thus the portrait.

In the photobooth session, Warhol was able to engineer an entire portrait experience for Mrs. Scull. By placing her in a unique setting he was able to create a distinctive experience permanently in her memories. This photobooth

²¹ Ibid.

session is one that Mrs. Scull described to her family, friends, and others in the art world for the rest of her life. Warhol knew that Mrs. Scull would love to brag about the experience to her social competitors and that it would help spread Warhol's name. It would also further his reputation for spontaneity, unpredictability, and originality.

After the photographs were taken Warhol's "real work" began. Warhol chose twenty-five photographs to compose the final painting. At this point Warhol made many critical decisions that guided his art for the rest of his career. His overall decision was essentially to stay the same. The artist chose to use a visual style for his commissioned portraits similar to his earlier portraits of celebrities like Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor.

This style consisted mainly of using photobooth pictures as the direct source for the final painting, unlike some of his earlier works, in which the paintings originated from drawn images. Warhol sent his selected images off to his trusted craftsmen to be transferred onto silkscreen. The silkscreen printing process was similar to that of the artist's previous work of iconic figures from the beginning of the sixties.

In earlier works such as *Marylin* and *Liz*, the artist duplicated images on a single canvas. The noticeable change in the Scull commission is seen in the way he created repetition within the work. In the portrait of Mrs. Scull, for the first time,

the artist printed each image on a separate canvas and assembled them into a grid.²² The final work looked similar to earlier works, but was constructed in a very different manner. Warhol embraced the idea that the owner could rearrange the work, at will, to create an entirely new painting and he made his painting in this manner from then on. (Fig. 7).

After deciding to use this new idea of printing the images on separate canvases, which made it easier to manufacture and manipulate the work, Warhol chose the color combination for the work via trial and error. The process involved overlaying the color combinations with a clear acetate printing of the final image. This enabled Warhol to visualize the final outcome before painting. The final work consisted of thirty-six individual canvases each with a separate colored background.

Another change has to do with his use of color. The works that he produced had a single image of Mrs. Scull silkscreened in black onto colored backgrounds. In earlier portraits of icons like *Marilyn* or *Liz*, Warhol colored certain parts of the subject's face, such as her lips and face, to create an image that has a background color, accent colors, and a black overlay. For example, in the famous *Gold Marilyn*, the background is all gold, Marilyn's skin is pink, her hair blonde, her eyebrows and shirt collar are teal, and her lips are red with black printed over

²² Dalton and Scherman, p. 164.

the other colors to fill in the details. But in Mrs. Scull's portrait, Warhol simply printed the subject's image in black onto the colored backgrounds.(Figs. 8,9).

The completed canvases were delivered to the Sculls' apartment unassembled shortly after Warhol decided he had finished the work. The nature of Warhol's new format of numerous individual images made transportation of a work more manageable when assembly was carried out on site. Warhol came to the Sculls' home to make sure everything went well. The Sculls were instructed to simply hang the canvases however they wished.²³ Warhol occasionally added his thoughts about how the canvases should relate to one another.(Fig. 10).

Mrs. Scull's approval for her painting brought fame to the artist during the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1969 "New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970." Mrs. Scull fought with curator Henry Geldzahler to ensure a prominent position for her beloved Warhol portrait. She wanted the work to be the talk of the show and wanted to make sure it was front and center. Warhol's assistant Gerard Malanga recalls the situation:

"Now there's an interesting story to that painting. Henry Geldzahler was the first curator of contemporary art and sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He was doing a big, mammoth show on contemporary art, I don't think it was specifically pop-art,

²³ Scull, Ethel in de Antonio.

but it was pretty pop-infused. Ethel demanded from Henry that the show open with her portrait on the [entry] wall. Talk about ego. So when you walked into the show, as you do in any kind of museum show, there's always one signature piece. With Ethel, she wanted that when you walked into the show. It *had* to be her portrait. I don't think Henry actually put that at the opening of the show."²⁴

A review of the opening of the exhibition in *The New York Times* noted quite clearly that Mrs. Scull did not get her way, "And in a nearby roomful of Pop art, the collector Ethel Scull watched mournfully as a smaller, staidier combo played decorously in front of her portrait by Andy Warhol, partially concealing it."²⁵

Although the work did not get the prominent placing Ethel Scull desired, the story does show how emotionally attached the sitter was to her portrait.

In his diaries, Warhol describes going to a lunch on August 6, 1984 on the occasion of Ethel Scull's gift of her portrait to the Whitney Museum. He writes about her remarks during which she talks about her experience of meeting with Warhol on the day of her portrait. Warhol recalls, "She said all these things about how I'd wanted \$1200 cash for the paintings...She said she came to my house and my mother answered the door."²⁶ Although Warhol goes on to say that he

²⁴ Malanga, Gerard. 2009. Interview by Rusty A. Meadows. Audio recording. November 6. Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia.

²⁵ Glueck, Grace. "Metropolitan Museum Opens Big Centennial Show." *New York Times*, October 17, 1969.

²⁶ Warhol, 1989, p. 592-593.

doesn't exactly agree with her story, the fact that she is recounting her experience with the artist shows that she enjoyed sharing it with others. Mrs. Scull still cherished the day that she was wowed by Warhol. She was telling a story she had told numerous times.

Put simply, by wowing his sitters, Warhol could rely on them to spread his name.

Chapter Three: Warhol's extensive use of his network to bring in clients

In the early 1960s as Warhol began trying to find representation by a gallery in New York, he started to make connections with people in the art world. Anxiously trying to persuade gallery owners and directors to exhibit his work, Warhol reached out to anyone who would accept his calls.²⁷ Although he was initially unsuccessful in obtaining representation, he was able to vastly expand his contacts. Once the artist was picked up by the Stable gallery in Los Angeles, he started to be known in the contemporary art world.²⁸ (Fig. 11).

By the mid-sixties, Warhol wanted to expand his reach further. As the reputation of his Factory studio and the parties he held in it reached beyond the art world, many people not commonly associated with the New York art scene began to take an interest in the artist. Once he expanded artistic productions into film and music, his fame expanded further and so did his number of connections.

By the early 1970s Warhol had collaborated with socialites and celebrities and had an enormous social network. He also had gained a great many contacts from the success of his Factory studio and the cult following it had developed. Between the celebrities he actively sought out and others who vied for his attention, Warhol had many people surrounding him. (Fig. 12).

²⁷ Dalton and Scherman, p. 70.

²⁸ Dalton and Scherman, p. 119.

Even in Warhol's earlier years of working on commissioned portraits, he was able to use the people he had working for him to make sure he obtained clients. In the mid-sixties, the money received from the commissioned portraits was not his primary source of income but, nevertheless, Warhol still aggressively sought out potential clients.

Speaking about the commissioned portraits of the mid 1960's Warhol's then assistant Gerard Malanga said the following:

"I think, Andy sort of was a bit of a hustler in those days too. So I think, because of the fact that Lita [Hornick] was gonna do my first book, which was a collaboration of the Screen Tests, Andy was sort of elbowing me saying, 'Can you get Lita to commission a portrait?' And I did, actually. And Lita was very open to that, she definitely loved the idea that Andy was gonna do her portrait. So that was the connection, and I worked on that, it was actually quite beautiful."²⁹

By the late sixties, the revenue from commissioned portraits made up the majority of the artist's income. Making matters difficult, Warhol worked concurrently on different projects, the most expensive of which were the films he was producing. After the artist gave up painting in 1965 to pursue film and other

²⁹ Malanga, November 6, 2009.

projects, he only painted when he needed money. His paintings were often commissioned portraits.

In *Pop: The Genius of Andy Warhol*, Dalton and Sherman write:

“Ever since his ‘retirement,’ Andy had painted, for the most part, only when he needed to fund a new film project. As he’d already discovered, the commissioned portraits he’d made since the early sixties -- 1963’s *Ethel Scull 36 Times* was the first -- were his most reliable and expeditious source of cash.”³⁰

Once Warhol became seriously engaged in the commissioned portrait business, around 1970, he began to put his network to use more extensively than in the past. In addition to ingeniously using all of the people he had working for him to bring in clients, Warhol used a number of art dealers to do the same. Warhol didn’t care where his clients came from as long as they were all paying.

In an interview, 1970s business assistant Vincent Fremont described how everyone was charged with bringing in portrait commissions:

“Vincent Fremont: If you worked for Andy, you basically helped with everything. I helped sell ads for *Interview*, until they had an

³⁰ Dalton and Sherman, p. 434.

advertising department. I went out to get commissions for portraits, and all sorts of things. So we were all trying to get commissioned portraits done, because first of all you would get a commission. Andy's philosophy was that the more money you make him, the more money you make for yourself. And he was very generous with commissions. The biggest in-house people for portrait commissions would have been Fred Hughes and Bob Colacello, who was the editor for *Interview*. But then we had a lot of independent art dealers who brought clients in to have their portraits done.

Rusty Meadows: Do you remember much of the process of seeking out sitters?

Vincent Fremont: The dealers convinced their people to have Andy do their portraits based on Andy's notoriety and fame. By '69, '70 he had been world famous for ten years. And, people approached him. If you were at a dinner, you could sort of talk up Andy's paintings and get people interested in the portrait. The price around '70-'71 was \$25,000 for the first panel and \$15,000 for the second. And most people, generally, got two. Eliciting a commission for a portrait was done very informally, generally over lunch or dinner, a more social occasion. And dealers, knowing they would get 20%

commission or more, would seek out wealthy individuals to see if they would like to get their portraits done. So it was a network of people working directly under Andy and those that had their own businesses and were independent dealers.

Rusty Meadows: Was everyone at the factory involved in that?

Vincent Fremont: Yeah, with the exception of the guy who cleaned the floors...Bob Colacello, was the editor of *Interview*, and he was out every night promoting the magazine, promoting Andy, promoting this, that, and the other. And part of it was to convince people to get their portraits done. The Europeans understood the history of portraiture, I mean because that's something that's gone down for centuries, that you commission portraits from an artist that you hand down to your family as a family heirloom. Americans are probably a little more difficult. But if you look at the line-up of subject matter there's quite a few. Fred got a lot of commissions, Fred was from Houston, so he got a number of Houston socialites. Primarily mostly women, but if you look at the portraits of the '70s at the Whitney, you see the check list of portraits there is pretty good. But you didn't have to be a celebrity to have your portrait done, you just had to have \$25,000.

Rusty Meadows: Was it a fairly easy sell in most cases by that time?

Vincent Fremont: In the '70s? It was easy enough, because the commissioned portrait business out of Andy's studios generated money to help pay the rent, to help pay the videos we were working on, *Interview* magazine. It generated enough money where it was a very good part of his business every year. Because, one person said, 'once you get one in you, you want another and another one,' a little bit of keeping up with the Jones', so to speak. A little bit of competitiveness. A lot of people didn't like Andy's work so it didn't matter, they wouldn't get their portrait done. But there was a big group of people that did understand Andy's work and liked it and appreciated having their portrait done-and had the wherewithal to pay for it."³¹

With a minimum price tag of \$25,000, Warhol quickly came to rely on commissions as a primary source of revenue. Warhol and his staff made sure the sitters were happy with their portraits by throwing lavish lunches with celebrities and offering many options for the final work.³² It was ultimately this vast network of friends, dealers, and employees that maintained this lavish portrait business

³¹ Fremont, Vincent. 2009. Telephone interview by Rusty A. Meadows. Audio recording. November 16. Muscarelle Museum of Art, Virginia.

³² Fremont interview.

for the artist. Without actively using the connections of his connections, Warhol would never have enjoyed the financial success he had as a portraitist.

Chapter Four: The *Screen Test* Experiment

Warhol's work changed most noticeably when the artist altered his art-making process. This change is seen in his switch from painting directly on canvases, to silk-screening. Another example is his shift from using a single canvas to multiple canvases grouped together, which first happened with the portrait of Ethel Scull.

Warhol only made changes when absolutely necessary. Gerard Malanga says in an interview, "I think Andy kinda liked to do the same thing over and over again. I think he felt comfortable doing that."³³ Yet despite Warhol's attachment to consistency, there was also a sense of experiment at the Factory. Describing the process of producing a series of film portraits called the "Screen Tests," Gerard Malanga talks about experimentation in the factory, "There was just sort of talk in the air about experimenting with different things."³⁴

One experiment was the multiyear *Screen Test* film portrait project. The *Screen Tests*, originally called "stillies," were short, silent films made to mimic still photography. Warhol's collaborator on this project, Gerard Malanga, describes their conception:

³³ Malanga interview, July 29, 2009.

³⁴ Malanga interview, July 29, 2009.

“Well, I think it was just shortly before we moved out of the firehouse for The Factory. I had an idea for a publicity photograph that I needed in case I was going to do a book of my work or for giving a poetry reading, whatever it was, I just thought I’d need a picture. I had many pictures but I thought it would be neat to do a portrait with movie film. I actually composed a shot and Andy filmed me and I developed the film and took it to the lab to get two or three or four frames from the footage to make a copy negative and then I would be able to make 8”x10” glossy prints. And because it came out so well I thought ‘we should do more portraits of other people.’ And that basically was the seeds for the beginning of the three-year project that resulted in the *Screen Test* portraits.”³⁵

Malanga goes on to describe the production of the films:

“It was very casual. We had chair, we had lighting, Billy Name helped us with the lighting. It was always somewhat different with each person but it was pretty standard. The instructions were basically “just relax, be yourself, look straight into the camera, if you want to smoke a cigarette you can do that too.” It was just very informal and the idea, actually from our point of view, was to create a moving portrait of the person. So instead of looking at a portrait,

³⁵ Malanga interview, July 29, 2009.

you would actually look at a person for three minutes when the film was projected on the screen.”³⁶

It is important to note that nearly every film was recorded by Warhol himself. The artist set up the camera, instructed how the lighting should be arranged, decided on the backdrop, and made other critical decisions. Warhol also always operated the camera. It was his eye that made sure the shot was composed properly and would produce the effect he desired. (Fig. 13).

When talking about the development of Warhol and himself as photographers, Malanga says, “Andy and I did the reverse, we went from filmmaking to photography.”³⁷ This notion of Warhol shifting from filmmaker to photographer was one that went unnoticed to those in the Factory and, more importantly, to Warhol himself. Malanga says they were unaware of this progression, but it was noticed by a critic upon watching them work:

“You know, the irony of all of this is that when Andy and I began doing all of these projects we were not really photographers at that time, it was a growth of that collaboration. A Swiss playwright and critic living in Zurich wrote an article in *Camera*, which was a very prestigious photography magazine in the 50’s, 60’s, and 70’s, in

³⁶ Malanga interview, July 29, 2009.

³⁷ Malanga interview, November 6, 2009.

which he made an interesting remark that Andy and I were ‘proto-photographers’ before we had ever picked up a real still camera. We were using film cameras to produce still photographs. It was funny to hear that coming from someone else because that person could see it where we couldn’t. What happened ultimately was Andy, in the early 70’s, went into using a Polaroid camera and graduated from that into an Instamatic. So, Andy and I both ended up being photographers, after the fact.”³⁸

It wasn’t until there was an immediate need for Warhol to become a photographer that any of this surfaced. In late 1968, Warhol was sued by Patricia Caulfield for using her photograph as the source image for his *Flowers* series of paintings.³⁹ Warhol then turned to the Polaroid instant camera as a way to produce source images for his paintings. (Fig. 14). Speaking about this forced switch, Gerard Malanga commented:

“The Polaroid came in there at the same time. Andy at that point realized that he could not rely any more on photographs for portraits. Unless it was given to Andy by the person he was doing the portrait of, and there was some kind of agreement. At that point, Andy could no longer be taking things out of newspapers and

³⁸ Malanga interview, July 29, 2009.

³⁹ Bockris, Victor. *The Life and Death of Andy Warhol*. London: Fourth Estate Ltd., 1998. p. 260.

magazines, because he had gotten sued once already and couldn't go back to that."⁴⁰

It was at this point that the acquired knowledge from filming some 500 film portraits became immediately useful as the artist had to photograph subjects really, for the first time. Without this background in lighting and composition on film, Warhol would have been forced to hire a photographer and his final works would have been completely different from those that were produced.

If Warhol had not been willing to experiment with the *Screen Tests*, then he may not have been prepared to photograph his subjects when he was forced to do so.

⁴⁰ Malanga interview, November 6, 2009.

Conclusion

When looking at Andy Warhol's progression from a young fine artist to an executive of a multi-media empire one may see that his success was due, in part, to his willingness to copy more from the consumerist world than his artistic competitors. Warhol didn't stop where Lichtenstein and Oldenburg did; instead he continued until the world that his art set out to imitate was the entire model for his success.

When Warhol took steps to transform his organization of friends in the original factory into a structured business he used efficiency and productivity to take make his business successful. The ability of Warhol and his employees to craft an environment in which Warhol could produce more than ever before was marked by his use of business procedures. Among them three stand out as the most important for his career: his ability to craft truly memorable sitter experiences, his willingness to leverage his network in order to fuel his success, and his willingness to experiment on projects that didn't necessarily promise an immediate or foreseeable benefit.

Each of these three approaches was successful. Warhol's ability to "wow" Ethel Scull while creating her commissioned portrait provided Warhol with fame and art world buzz. Warhol's ability to use employees such as Vincent Fremont and Fred Hughes to bring in commissions helped support his other creative endeavors.

Finally, his experimentation with Gerard Malanga while producing the *Screen Test* film portraits provided him with critical photography skills that would pay off for the rest of his career. Overall, these instances show that his decision to operate as more than an individual are what made him into the legend that he is today.

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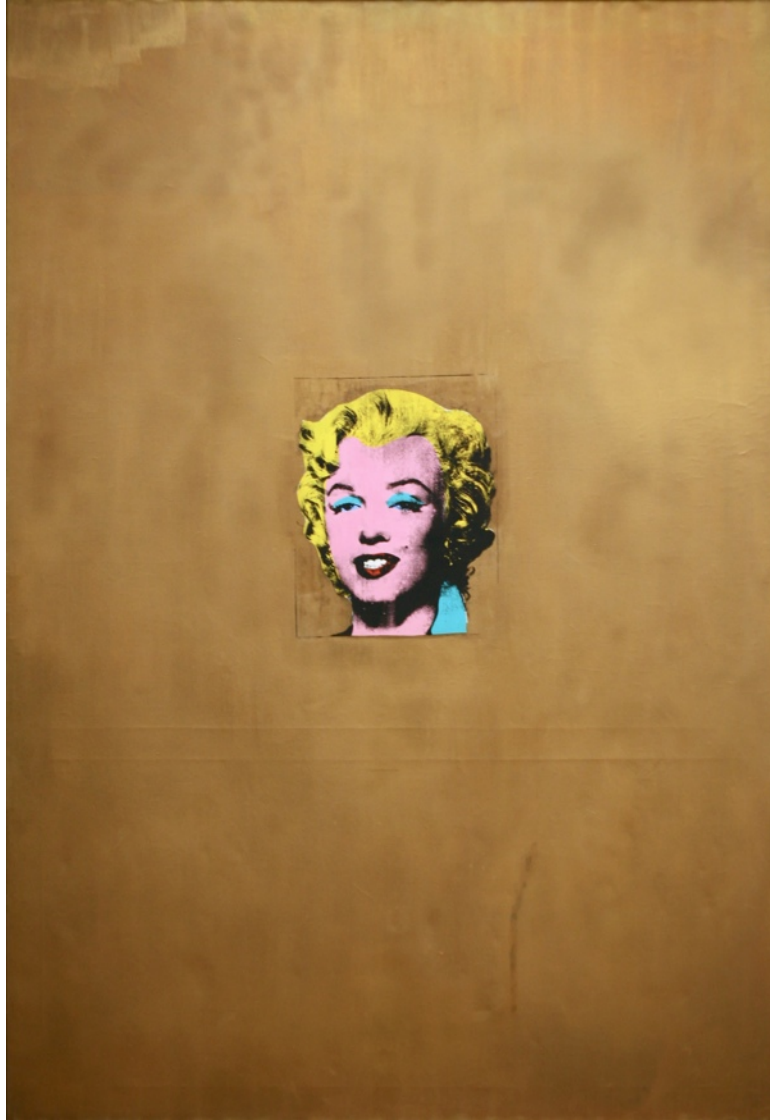
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